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Transfer 2.0 and Beyond! An Update

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Introduction

Since its inception in 2006, the UKSG-sponsored Transfer initiative has sought to minimize problems of interrupted access at the point when e-journals are transferred between publishers. This paper presents an update on the steps taken to date, how the various Transfer mechanisms work in practice, and the intentions of the Transfer team in promoting and developing the initiative in future.

We begin with a review of the kinds of problems that originally stimulated the work and then update this with headline results from two surveys conducted during 2011. Next, we explain the main elements of the Transfer initiative—a voluntary Code of Practice that is endorsed by nearly 40 publishers, a basic alerting service, and an ongoing program of communication and advocacy. Following is a brief discussion of how Transfer information can be usefully incorporated into the daily working routines of e-resource librarians.

Finally, we look ahead, both to indicate issues under examination for the next release (Version 3.0) of the Code and to indicate the benefits to the library and publishing communities of wider adoption of Transfer's ideas.

Bright Hopes and Unintended Consequences

Broadly speaking, journals migrate between publishers for two main reasons. There are strictly commercial purchases or divestments, usually but not always resulting in a change of ownership. And there are periodic transfers of society journals between publishers, usually without change of ownership, as those societies seek better visibility or commercial exploitation of the titles they own. In both cases, the driving objectives are that the journal be better positioned, more actively promoted, and generally more successful once the transfer has been completed.

All of these aims are of course admirable, and frequently many may be achieved. But e-journals, in particular, can be vulnerable to a variety of issues at

the point of transfer, with seamless access easily threatened. And if that access is interrupted or delayed in any way, the (library) customer tends to bear the brunt of the work needed to investigate and resolve the situation.

More specifically, a number of problems can (and unfortunately, do) arise, including:

- Interrupted access
- Delayed access
- Disappearing back files
- Wrangling over entitlements
- Changed login or authentication procedures
- Administrative load in fixing new or altered setups.

Among the causes of these problems, the following stand out:

- Poor communication—within or between the publishers involved, or from the publishers to customers or key intermediaries.
- Different infrastructures in place before and after the transfer, resulting in issues of compatibility, technical features or procedures, etc.
- Missing or scrambled data. This is unfortunately a rubric for many potential issues, covering as it does the e-content itself, subscription information, access or authentication keys, and administrative information within the customer's ILS or other internal systems.
- Lack of coordination or time. Transfers can constitute pressured situations, quite different from "business as usual", against the background of tight completion or renewal deadlines, and it is perfectly possible that individuals involved are not always fully aware of, or in control of, the "big picture".

Feedback from Customers and Providers

Although of course none of the parties involved deliberately set out to create problems with journal transfers, issues nevertheless do arise.

Given their pivotal position in providing access to e-resources, librarians have been understandably vocal about the difficulties they face with transferred titles. Project Transfer sought to involve librarians from the outset in its efforts to understand and improve the situation; in May 2011 an ICOLC/Transfer survey sought to update and analyze those concerns further:

- 91.4% of librarians surveyed felt that the transfer of journals between publishers causes them “very” or “fairly” significant problems.
- Almost 50% of respondents spend a lot of time amending serials management systems and internal records as a result of transfers.
- The area where the highest percentage of respondents said they have often experienced problems was “subscription information” (delays in data being transferred to the new publishers, intermediaries not being informed).
- When asked to list the two most significant transfer issues that cause them problems, librarians mainly cited access to current content and the time required to amend their systems.
- Access to archives/backfiles, big deals, and pricing were also cited.

(The ICOLC/Transfer survey attracted 164 respondents: 65% from North America, 14% from Europe, and 14.5% from the Asia-Pacific region.)

It is interesting (and perhaps encouraging!) to note that publishers themselves also report problems with the transfer process. Quite apart from the attendant risks of disgruntled customers, these include bad press and, in a worst case, the possibility of cancellation!

As a small digression, it may be useful at this point to note that Transfer uses the nomenclature “Transferring Publisher” and “Receiving Publisher” to distinguish the parties involved. Bearing in mind, in particular, the situation of transferring society journals, these terms have NO connotations of ownership.

To complement the ICOLC/Transfer survey mentioned above, Transfer canvassed the opinion of a number of publishers in June 2011. This second sur-

vey, involving publishers in both “Transferring” and “Receiving” roles, identified a number of issues:

- The area where the highest percentage of Transferring publishers had often experienced problems was the transfer of subscriber information. Over 70% of respondents sometimes or often had problems in this area.
- Many Transferring publishers did not know whether there had been communication with a large number of third-party organizations, including A&I services and link resolver companies.
- The areas where Receiving publishers had most often experienced problems were the receipt of subscriber information and content files.
- 55% of receiving publishers grace online access to existing subscribers for one month or more.
- 60% of respondents did not have a central coordinator responsible for overseeing the transfer of journal publishing arrangements.

(The Transfer publishers’ survey attracted 151 individual respondents, which were drawn from 34 commercial publishers, 8 nonprofits, 16 societies, and 7 university presses.)

What Is Transfer?

Transfer is an ongoing initiative, sponsored by the UKSG but with an international remit, membership and support. For more details, see <http://www.uksg.org/transfer>.

There are three main components of Transfer’s work. The first is a voluntary Code, containing best practice guidelines for both Transferring and Receiving publishers. The Code was first released in 2006 and followed by the current Version 2.0 in 2008. Work is ongoing on a revised and updated Version 3.0, likely to be published during 2012. As of November 2011, 36 publishers have publicly endorsed the Code (see later).

The second component is a simple alerting service. Using a basic email listserv, this communicates details of journals “on the move” to almost 400 registered recipients—mainly librarians. The publishers involved in each such transfer provide the information contained in the alerting service.

The third component of Transfer's work is an ongoing, if informal, program of education and presentations to help different constituencies in the library supply chain better understand each other's problems and priorities.

Transfer itself is maintained and championed by a small international working group—consisting of 8 publishers, 5 librarians and 6 others—meeting once every two months, usually by phone conference.

The Transfer Code of Practice

Version 2.0 of the Code covers six main areas of the transfer process, as follows.

Access to the transferred title is the initial, and in some ways the most fundamental objective. In a Transfer context, this includes not only access to “current content” but also ensuring continued access for customers where the Transferring Publisher has granted perpetual access entitlements.

Provisions around **digital content files** constitute a crucial element. These cover the transfer of digital files and span both current (born digital) and archival (digitized from print) content, where available.

Subscription lists are crucial in engineering smooth transfers. Here, key Transfer provisions involve early transfer of such lists and an outline of important subscriber information elements that should be included.

Journal URLs are an important element in facilitating uninterrupted access. Within the Transfer Code, this topic covers the transfer of journal-related domain name(s) and provision of a link or redirect to the new journal home page.

DOI name ownership has a similar significance in maintaining the discoverability of and access to a transferred e-resource. This Transfer topic covers changes to Digital Object Identifier (DOI) name ownership and good procedural practice in registering such changes.

Finally, as indicated elsewhere, **Communication** is a vital component in the overall transfer. The specific recommendations of the Code cover communication with customers (including recipients of elec-

tronic ToC alerts) and relevant intermediaries in the supply chain.

But Does It Work?

By endorsing the Code and registering as “Transfer compliant”, publishers agree to abide—wherever commercially possible—by the terms of the Transfer Code of Practice. The endorsement and sign-up are entirely voluntary, but we believe they provide significant benefits both to the participating publishers and, most importantly, to the user communities that they serve.

The voluntary nature of publisher involvement is an important point. From the outset Transfer has been careful to avoid anything that might advocate or involve anticompetitive practice. It is therefore difficult (and perhaps undesirable) to give the Code more “teeth”. We therefore endeavor to tread a line so as to maintain independence: Our approach is to educate and encourage, not enforce. And Transfer deliberately has co-chairs from different communities (one publisher and one librarian) to reflect the variety of interests around the table and encourage cooperative solutions.

The situation is not perfect, so we continue to work to improve matters. A recent informal listserv poll alerted us to several ongoing issues, some involving Transfer-compliant publishers. We are in the process of investigating these and seeing what we can do to resolve them.

But overall, we believe Transfer works and increasingly others do too. Librarians and societies are increasingly requesting Transfer compliance in their licensing and contractual agreements with publishers. Other reports and initiatives (from JISC Collections and others) are citing Transfer and recommending compliance. Transfer's recommendations are also providing a useful framework for overhauling internal procedures and encouraging a degree of “self-regulation” on the part of publishers.

A Basic Alerting Service

The basic alerting service in place as of November 2011 is, we believe simple but reasonably effective. (And, see later, an enhanced service is currently under development.) It doesn't of itself solve problems, but it provides a useful mechanism or “heads

up” to librarians that a particular title might be one to watch over coming months.

Participating publishers provide a simple set of information items about the title to be transferred:

- Names of Transferring and Receiving Publishers & contact persons at both;
- Title and ISSN of journal being transferred;
- Effective transfer date;
- Plus some other information, illustrated later.

Based upon the information provided, email alerts are generated and sent to subscribing recipients. Most recipients to date have been librarians, but other players such as subscription agencies are also interested on behalf of their customers. And as knowledge of Transfer spreads, other interested parties—including agencies involved in A&I services, list resolver population, etc.—are expected to sign up.

By summer 2011, 215 journal transfers had been notified using this mechanism and many more have followed. (For example, 14 transfers were notified on the day preceding the Charleston Conference presentation alone!) The volume of such notifications is of course somewhat seasonal but we have noted an underlying continued growth in uptake.

Spreading the Word

Transfer can only be effective if its recommendations are known, understood, and generally endorsed within the e-resource supply chain. Therefore the Transfer working group endeavors to take opportunities wherever possible to brief diverse audiences and argue for wider uptake.

We recognize that different players in the transfer process have different concerns and motivations, so we try to tailor information accordingly for publishers, societies, and librarians. Publishers in particular need to be aware of the downstream effects of transfer operations, so that they can avoid or mitigate problems that could otherwise arise.

One key conclusion has been that central control or coordination within the publishing house helps avoid problems and encourages prompt and effective communication to the market. In this regard, it is noteworthy that a number of leading publishers have

consciously moved toward either central coordination of transfer activities or nominated persons as contact points for all aspects of particular transfers.

Societies, too, are encouraged to support Transfer compliance, whether they self-publish or partner with commercial publishers.

More generally, Transfer works to prompt all the players involved to think through and understand the issues involved. By good preparation it is possible at least to sidestep some obvious pitfalls.

Publishers Endorsing Transfer

The following list shows those publishers endorsing Transfer as of November 2011. Note that there is an interesting mix, containing both the biggest players in the market and a significant number of the more switched-on and alert of the smaller players!

ALPSP

American Diabetes Association
American Institution of Physics
American Psychological Association
Berg Publishers
Biomed Central
Brill Publishers
Cambridge University Press
Co-Action Publishing
Earthscan Publishers
Edinburgh University Press
Elsevier
Emerald
European Respiratory Society
Future Science
GUD Publishing
IOP
IOS Press
Liverpool University Press
Manchester University Press
Nature Publishing Group
Oxford University Press
Palgrave Macmillan
Pier Professional
Portland Press
Royal Society of Chemistry
Rural Sociological Society
Rockefeller University Press
Sage Publications
Society for General Microbiology

Springer
Symposium Journals
Taylor & Francis
Walter de Gruyter
Wiley Blackwell
Wolters Kluwer Health

Other publishers are actively considering joining the list, both for the benefits that they themselves perceive and in response to increasing requests from their librarian and consortial customers.

Putting It All Together

Obviously, the publisher's role in Project Transfer is essential. We shouldn't forget that the librarian's role is also necessary, and there are a number of ways for librarians to become more involved. For those who purchase materials from publishers not yet endorsing Transfer, we encourage them to make these publishers aware of the project and direct them to the Transfer website. Librarians may also subscribe to the Transfer notification listserv, which will automatically send you an e-mail when a publisher submits a Transfer notification for a title. Information about the notifications and the listserv can be found on the Project Transfer website at <http://www.uksg.org/transfer/notifications>.

After joining the listserv, there are several ways of incorporating the e-mail notifications into your e-resource workflow. At Miami University Library, we use these e-mails in combination with the features of Microsoft Outlook to simplify the title transfer workflow. We dedicate a folder in our Inbox to Transfer notifications, where we retain the e-mails which pertain to titles that we subscribe to. We generally keep the e-mails even after the title transfer has been completed, in the event that we need to go back to check dates or contact information. The subject line of a notification e-mail generally contains the name of the title, the name of the publisher to which the title is transferring, and the approximate date of transfer. The message generally contains the following fields:

- Transferring Publisher: University of California Press
- Transferring Publisher contact name: John Smith

- Transferring Publisher contact email: jsmith@ucpress.edu
- Society (if applicable): Society for the Study of Symbolic Interaction
- Journal Title: Symbolic Interaction
- ISSN: 0195-6086
- Receiving Publisher: Wiley-Blackwell
- Receiving Publisher contact name: Jane Doe
- Receiving Publisher contact email: jdoe@wiley.com
- Effective Transfer Date: Jan 2012

The notice contains key information about the transfer, most importantly a specific contact at each publisher or vendor. This information is a significant improvement over the generic customer support e-mail addresses that we often use.

When we determine that a notification contains a title to which we subscribe, we note the planned date of the transfer and then flag the e-mail so that it appears in our Outlook Task List just before the transfer date. To flag an e-mail, we highlight the e-mail within our folder or inbox and right click on the flag symbol on the right side. When the drop-down menu opens, we choose the "Custom" option—this opens a dialog box where we can click on the arrow to the right of the "Due Date" option and view a calendar. From here, we may choose a date just before the transfer which will allow enough time to begin our workflow. For those who have a hard time remembering to check a task list, Outlook also gives users the option to add a reminder which will generate a pop-up and/or play a sound on the due date. On the due date when the item shows up in our Task List, we begin the rest of our title transfer workflow, which may include updating ILS records, ERM records, and/or A to Z list information. While this isn't a complete workflow solution for our institution, it does make remembering and starting our workflow much smoother.

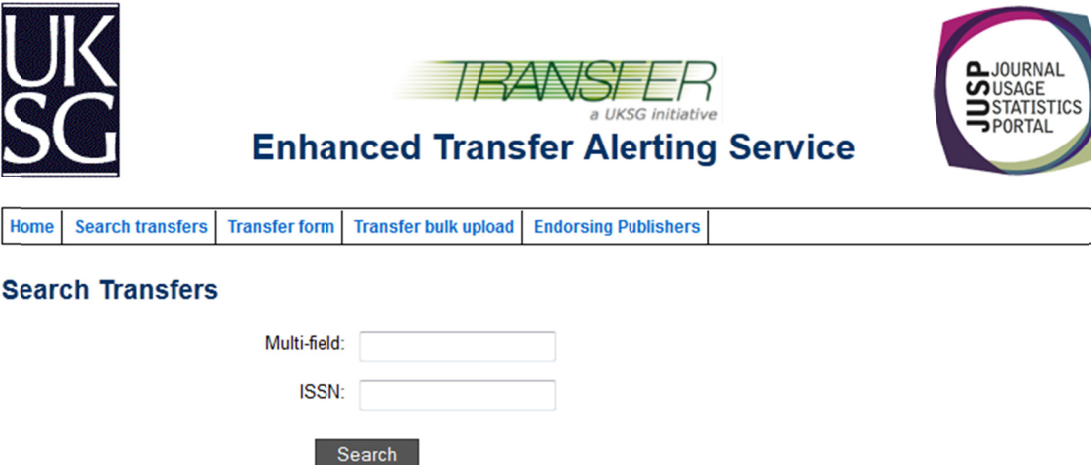
Upgrading the Transfer Alerting Service

The Transfer alerting service will be undergoing some useful enhancements in the near future. Currently, the basic alerting service performs its function competently but is not very flexible. The Transfer team proposed enhancements to UKSG and JISC (Joint Information Systems Committee) funding was

approved for an improved service called ETAS (Enhanced Transfer Alerting Service). Not only will these enhancements make the alerting service better but they also include the creation of a searchable database which will underpin and complement the service, as well as the inclusion of archival and perpetual access information. MIMAS (based at the University of Manchester in the UK) will host and

run the service and database as part of the JUSP (Journal Usage Statistics Portal). As of December 2011, the ETAS has been designed and created, and is undergoing testing for release in the near future. The screenshots below (figures 1-4) are approximations of what the new service will look like from the searchable database perspective as well as the publisher submission form perspective.

Figure 1: ETAS Beta Search Screen



Search terms	Search Type	Returns records containing
collaborative environments	Or	'collaborative' or 'environments'
+collaborative +environments	And	'collaborative' and 'environments'
"collaborative environments"	Phrase	the phrase 'collaborative environments'
+collaborative -environments	And Not	'collaborative' but not 'environments'
coll*	Wildcard	'collection', 'collision', 'collaborative', 'colloidal', etc.

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Figure 2: ETAS Beta Search Results

Search Results

Search for pediatric returned 1 result(s)

Receiving Publisher	
Name	Biomed Central
Contact name	Stefan Busch
Contact email	Stefan.busch@biomedcentral.com
Transfer compliant	Yes
Transferring Publisher	
Name	Hindawi
Contact name	Mohamed Hamdy
Contact email	mohamed.hamdy@hindawi.com
Transfer compliant	No
Journal	
Title	International journal of Pediatric Endocrinology
Society	Pediatric Endocrine Society (PES)
Print ISSN	1687-9856
Online ISSN	-
DOI	
Frequency	Monthly
Transfer details	
URL	http://www.ijpeonline.com/
Effective transfer date	2011-03-10
First vol issue date	
Special circumstances	
Perpetual access	
Digital preservation agreements	LOCKSS;
Perpetual access policies	The journal's back content is open access in its entirety and available at http://www.ijpeonline.com/

Figure 3: ETAS Beta Publisher Submission Form

Home	Search transfers	Transfer form	Transfer bulk upload	Endorsing Publishers	
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Fields in **bold** are required.

– **Receiving Publisher**

Publisher name:

If Other - please specify:

Contact name:

Contact email:

Transfer compliant: ☐ Yes ☐ No

– **Transferring Publisher**

Publisher name:

If Other - please specify:

Contact name:

Contact email:

Transfer compliant: ☐ Yes ☐ No

– **Journal**

Journal Title:

Society (if applicable):

Print and/or Online ISSN:

Print ISSN: -

Online ISSN: -

Journal Title DOI:

Journal frequency:

Figure 4: ETAS Beta Publisher Submission Form (Con't)

Transfer details

Receiving Publisher Journal URL:

Effective Transfer Date: ⓘ - Day - - Mon - - Year -

Receiving Publisher First issue:

Volume:

Issue:

Date:

Notes on any special circumstances:

Archive & perpetual access

Digital Preservation Agreements: ⓘ

☐ British Library

☐ CLOCKSS

☐ LOCKSS

☐ Koninklijke Bibliotheek

☐ Portico

Perpetual access policies: ⓘ

☐ Receiving Publisher only will have archive

☐ Transferring Publisher only will have archive

☐ Both Publishers will have archive

☐ Transferring Publisher will have archive up to
Year:

☐ Receiving Publisher will have archive from
Year:

☐ Other

If Other - please specify:

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Topics Under Discussion Now

Work on Project Transfer continues and version 3.0 is currently under discussion. Preservation has become an urgent topic for both librarians and vendors and the Transfer working group is discussing whether transferring or receiving publishers should clarify where responsibility lies for preservation after a transfer. Also under consideration is how to make title transfer information more readily visible to discovery services and link resolvers. More and more libraries are purchasing discovery services and we all depend on our link resolvers—having transfer information go directly to these vendors may streamline our workflow further. Discussion

regarding the discoverability of journals by search engines just after a transfer has also come up—often when domain names changes after a transfer, information about that journal disappears from search engine indices unless re-directs and meta-tags have been set up on both the transferring and receiving ends. We are also considering the idea of guidelines for redirecting social media sites and apps—more and more publishers are creating social media functionality for their titles. Under consideration (within the restraints of data protection and privacy issues) we have also talked about transferring publishers sending a list of administrative registrants to receiving publishers, so that communica-

tion might be streamlined that way. Finally, we are considering whether to more formally recommend the Transfer alerting service and database by better

educating stakeholders and strengthening the language of the code.

To learn more about Project Transfer, please refer to the website at <http://www.uksg.org/transfer>.